



**You have downloaded a document from  
RE-BUS  
repository of the University of Silesia in Katowice**

**Title:** Children's participation idea and practice: Korczak's inspirations and contemporary faces

**Author:** Ewa Jarosz

**Citation style:** Jarosz Ewa. (2018). Children's participation idea and practice: Korczak's inspirations and contemporary faces. "Polish Journal of Educational Studies" (Vol. 71, iss. 1 (2018), s. 33-50), doi 10.2478/poljes-2018-0004



Uznanie autorstwa - Użycie niekomercyjne - Bez utworów zależnych Polska - Licencja ta zezwala na rozpowszechnianie, przedstawianie i wykonywanie utworu jedynie w celach niekomercyjnych oraz pod warunkiem zachowania go w oryginalnej postaci (nie tworzenia utworów zależnych).



UNIWERSYTET ŚLĄSKI  
W KATOWICACH



Biblioteka  
Uniwersytetu Śląskiego



Ministerstwo Nauki  
i Szkolnictwa Wyższego

# POLISH JOURNAL *of* EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

ISSN 2657-3528

2018, Vol. I (LXXI)

DOI: 10.2478/poljes-2018-0004

---

## **Children's participation idea and practice: Korczak's inspirations and contemporary faces**

**Ewa Jarosz<sup>1</sup>****ABSTRACT**

Currently, children's participation is one of the most promoted ideas of the social development. As mentioned in several resources, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has its roots in Janusz Korczak's philosophy of a child and relations between a child and an adult and his pedagogy. The most fundamental Korczak's thoughts, listening to a child and giving respect to his or her opinion, are well-known pillars of the contemporary children's participation idea. However, there are much more Korczak's inspirations that can be recognised in the current discourse about children's participation. The paper shows and considers these inspirations, and on this basis some meaningful aspects of the idea of participation are presented.

**KEYWORDS:**

children's participation, children's citizenship, child–adult partnership, Janusz Korczak

### **Introduction: children's participation idea and its meaning**

Since the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been established in 1989, the idea of children's participation has been developing dynamically in the public, practical and scientific discourse. Contemporary children's participation or, like some authors prefer (eg. Cockburn, 2013), active citizenship of children and young people is the most effective and spectacular embodiment of the idea of child's subjectivity. Currently, it is seen as both a goal and a tool for developing democracy in societies. It is considered as a way of equalising children's social position and as their social inclusion which can be possible by

---

1 University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland.

E-MAIL: ewa-jarosz@post.pl, ORCID: 0000-0002-3207-0148

giving children the access to decision-making processes and other citizenship activities. The right 'to be heard' as sometimes the idea is called for short is directly stated in article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and also presented in other articles in the Convention (articles 13, 14, 15, 16, 17). Through this document, the implementation of children's participation turns into the states' obligation. It leads to the call of a duty for people, institutions, organisations and state entities. The Convention and some following documents (e.g. CRC General Comment No. 12 (2009)) indicate that the implementation of children's participation should be developed in various social contexts and at many social levels, where children's matters are discussed and the decisions are made. A complex thinking about practical application of the Convention leads from a family, through the states' strategies to policies of proper sectors. The Convention on the Rights of the Child with the participation rights promotes the perspective of appreciation of children as social actors and social partners to adults and entitled to have the voice, to make decision, to take part in several social activities, to organise into groups, to take the initiative, to express their opinion freely and finally to take part in political participation. From this point of view, the children's participation is a great challenge to the traditional concepts of a child, where scholars identified two main approaches: Dionysian and Apollonian views on childhood (Jenks, 1996) and the domination of the concept of children as dependent 'becomings', belonging to their parents or other adults (Warming et al., 2018). The concept of children's participation stands also in opposition to the traditional model of relationship between children and adults, and to the rooted in centuries a superiority and power of adults over children including the subordination of children. In children's participation idea, not only children are seen as authors of their own lives, as Beck (1997) indicated over two decades ago, but also they are important actors on the social scene, which advocates in their own case and in matters' of the environment where they live (Cockburn, 2013; Lansdowne, 2010). In this idea, children are recognised and respected as social activists, reviewers of social and political decisions and researchers of their own reality (Wyness, 2012; Toots et al., 2014; Dahl, 2014). This idea promotes a different model, where children and adults cooperate and collaborate in various areas of social life and at variety of social levels (Coleman, 2010). The perspective has changed from 'for children' into 'with children'.

### **Where to look for the beginning of children's participation idea?**

Some authors see the beginning of the idea of children's participation in some works of philosophers of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. For example, Milne (2013, pp. 184–185) indicated Kant, Hegel or Rousseau as protagonists of

the view of a child as a citizen and the nomination of a child as equal to an adult. He also mentioned some pedagogues – Montessori and Dewey as visionaries of children's rights, democratic relationships in education and of the concept of the child as a citizen. Some other authors pointed out that children's participation existed in the history in social practice, in the meaning of various social acts of children and their spontaneous social activity, for example, a children's strike for demanding better treatment at school – for shorter school hours and the end of corporal punishment at schools, which took place in 1911 (Tisdall, 2015). These examples of informal activity of children and self-generated behaviours of children and natural tendency and skills to organise themselves would be seen today as children's participation, besides other formal activities and the existence of representative forms, as pointed out by Hart (1992 and 2009).

By considering the meaning and forms of the modern concept of children's participation, we can clearly tell the direct holistic conceptual background of it. It is the philosophy and pedagogy of Janusz Korczak. Whatever and whoever could be taken into account, Korczak was indeed the first who gave the complete ideological description of children's right to participate in social life. He put an accent not only on the value of a child as a human being, i.e. not only he talked about child's freedom, child's subjectivity and child's potentials to have voice and make reasonable choices (what others before him had already done) but also he was the first one who nominated a child to be a citizen (Cockburn, 2013; Jarosz, 2013; Krappmann, 2013; Milne, 2013): a citizen in the meaning of being a full-righted member of a society. What was a revolutionary idea in his times, Korczak considered a child as an actual citizen, not as becoming, in the process of preparation or the future citizenship. He stated that a child is already a citizen. In this meaning, Korczak's idea of a child became the most influential and primal for the contemporary concept of children's citizenship (Milne, 2013).

The new concept of a child and the philosophy of the relationships between a child and adult given by Korczak became one of the fundamental dimensions of the Convention. It became a background for creating children's rights, universal constitution (Łopatka, 2000). His thought that a child is a citizen from now on; that child's citizenship starts from the birth (Mitchell, 2015) was indeed the ideological basis for the main thesis of the Convention.

Korczak's foundation of children's participation idea can be clearly seen not only in his works but also in his pedagogical practice, in his everyday interactions with children and the educational system created by him and his co-workers in Warsaw at orphanages he run before the Second World War (Krappmann, 2013). This practice is considered to be the first experiment of implementing social participation of children in real life at the educational institution ever (Milne, 2013, p. 236). Moreover, Korczak's practical application of children's participation may be seen today as reaching the

highest levels of modern taxonomies of participation in general (see, for example, Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001, Lansdowne, 2010).

For scholars and academicians, who studied and got to know Janusz Korczak's philosophy and psychology, there are no doubts to call him a 'conceptual father' of the contemporary idea of children's participation and to acknowledge his crucial role in today's understanding of children's participation.

### **From the past to the present**

Some of Korczak's thoughts are the pillars of the contemporary children's participation idea. They create its framework. Others seem to resonate in many of the aspects, like echoes. Let us consider these thoughts, and also Korczak's practice, and reflect on their significant presence in the contemporary discourse and practice on children's participation.

#### **Respect to the child's subjectivity and child's voice: as the core rules in relation with children**

Central point in Korczak's view on a child is child's subjectivity, and the first rule in relationship with a child is to respect his/her subjectivity, what meant for Korczak first of all listening to the child with attention and appreciating child's point of view. He believed in a child's ability to present reasonable opinions and to make constructive choices and responsible decisions. He wrote: "The child is a rational being. He appreciates the needs, difficulties and impediments in his life", and he indicated that "...the child ... is able to consider the serious problem...",<sup>2</sup> and he demanded to acknowledge a child's point of view and will in everyday life. This thought is easily recognised in the most fundamental for children's participation rights article of the Convention – article 12, "States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child".

But Korczak was thinking that respecting a child's voice is visible also in the context of fulfilling the very basic need of a child – the need for recognition. He said: "The child wants to be treated seriously, he demands confidence...". Currently, in a discourse on children's participation, we can find strong positions that try to explain participation of children on a theoretical level by theories of recognition, positions that show recognition as a crucial developmental experience and, on the other hand, the lack of

---

2 All quotations with few exceptions come from Janusz Korczak, *Pisma wybrane* [Selected works] by Aleksander Lewin, Nasza Księgarnia, Warsaw 1984.

it as the background of different negative individuals and also social consequences (Thomas, 2012; Fitzgerald, Graham, Smith, & Taylor, 2010).

### **Children as advisors and reporters of their lives**

Korczak called children the best experts in their lives, i.e. experts in considering their own matters. Children are those – he convinced – who know better how their problems should be solved “...If you grown-ups asked us, we could often advise well. We know better, what we suffer from, ...we do know ourselves better...” – he declared on behalf of children. Korczak was indeed a pioneer of understanding the role of children's voice in recognising children's problems and needs by adults and finding good solutions to these problems. We all know his utterance “without the participation of experts we shall never succeed, and the expert is the child”.

Looking at today's discourse and practice on the participation of children, and also at the modern concept of research on children and the childhood study based on the idea of the rights of the child, we can see that there are strong positions to respect subjective worlds of children and participation of children in exploring situations, experiences or problems affecting children (Soffer & Ben-Arieh, 2014). Even more, children's participation in research is promoted by offering and encouraging children to become co-researchers or researchers in mutual (with adults) studies or even as child-led research (Hart, 1992; Dahl, 2014; Yamashita & Davies, 2010, Liebel, 2008a, 2008b; Skyrme & Woods 2018). There is also, related to the issues mentioned earlier, a strong discourse on ethical issues in doing research where children are engaged in any way (Canosa et al., 2018; Berman et al., 2013, UNICEF, 2013). In addition, we can indicate situations of describing children's everyday life and problems by children themselves through the use of different media – child journalism (Damaj et al., 2010; Hart, 1992). Children as reporters of their lives are more and more visible as the ones who create and share information. We can observe a growing number of initiatives, where children inform about their everyday lives or their problems or present their views on various matters, using media available for them. Nowadays, we very often see children as reporters of their lives in the cyberspace. These activities are also mentioned by experts (Hart, 2009) as the sphere of informal, ‘natural’ children's participation in the meaning of developing their inner social life, sharing stories and creating children's culture. We can see today raising child journalism on smaller or wider scale. Let us mention ‘The Little Review’ – Korczak's pedagogical invention, probably the first newspaper of children and youth in the world (not for them), a newspaper led by children and created by children, where they could write, describe their matters, tell the stories and inform about various events or problems. It was a very serious activity, with a circulation near 50,000, and was issued since 1926 till the first day of World War II.

### **A child is able and righted to decision-making not only in child's matters**

Korczak acknowledged the participation of a child in decision-making processes. He pointed out: "Not questionable is the right to voice his thoughts, to active participation in our consideration and verdicts concerning him". In addition, we can see in the practice of educational institution led by Korczak that it was understood as the right to have the voice not only in child's own matters but also in matters of the social environment where a child lives. Looking at Korczak's statements, and also at different methods and measures he introduced into the pedagogical practice in the orphanage, he gave children the space for making decisions – decisions important not only for individuals, but for the whole community of the institution. Children could decide together with adults about different matters concerning the life in the orphanage. This way Korczak created a real democratic community where everybody whether a child or an adult has an influence on mutual matters, but even more, Korczak made it possible for children to decide about some matters on their own – so self-governance. We can see those Korczak's thoughts and methods as close to the modern levels of participation, as described in classical works in taxonomies of participation (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2001; Milne, 2013).

### **Self-governance of children**

Korczak shaped opportunities for children to experience self-governing, and he created tools for children to help them to exercise social participation in everyday activities. In the Korczak's orphanages, children could give opinions and their opinions were taken into account. Even more, Korczak's children could also decide on themselves without adults' involvement. They were encouraged to self-determination and to take responsibility for solving everyday problems on their own. Thus, Janusz Korczak gave children opportunities for something more than participation ... for self-determination and self-governance. His children had the power and had a lot of space where they could decide on their own and govern themselves. In addition, they really did it. Through opening these doors and giving methods to self-governance, Korczak created the new opportunity for children and created space where they could do various activities without being censored by adults and where they could organise their living according to their own beliefs and needs.

The categories such as self-governance and child-initiated, child-governed, child-led projects are desired phenomena in today's understanding of children's participation. Looking at modern taxonomies of children's participation, we can see that self-governance is placed at the highest levels in them. There are many examples. Meaning that it is similar to the highest step in classical Hart's ladder of participation called by the author 'Child-initiated, shared decisions with adult' (Hart, 1992, p. 4), where in the explanation, some examples of self-governed children's project are given (Ibi-



dem, p. 14). Clearly, we can see it in Treseder's (1997) model, where it is named 'Child-initiated and directed', also in Driskell's (2002) proposal named 'Children in charge' stage, in Davis's (2009) Matrix, and in Wong et al.'s (2011) typology, and also in Gerison Lansdown's model where it is named 'Child-led participation' and is explained as situations, when children are provided with the space and opportunity to initiate their own activities and carry out advocacy, and where children create their own structures or organisations through which they determine issues that are the most important to them (Lansdowne, 2005). It may be shaped, as Lansdowne shows, in various forms: child-led projects, child-led organisations or child-led research. In today's discussion concerning children's participation, children are seen as able to self-govern within and outside institutions and as those who should be empowered and encouraged to self-manage their reality in various social contexts, wherever it is possible (Hart, 1992; 1997; Johnson, 2009). One of the forms of self-governance is children's activity in autonomous organisations, as child-led organisations. These forms need as much attention as possible and bringing up at all social levels (Johnson, 2009) also at the international one. "Children should form international associations to engage themselves for equal rights for children..."; this Korczak's appeal is coming true today.

### **Participation and self-governance of children: the best way for developing citizen's competencies**

Korczak believed that a child is able to develop on his own social competencies, citizenship skills and social engagement through practising. To make different social/citizenship activities more familiar to children, Korczak created special tools to help children practise social participation. The most known are children's parliament, court of peers and the newspaper, but there were also others. Korczak developed a convenient method for these circumstances, special environment, where children could practise various social activities without management, control and direction of adults. There, in the atmosphere of real self-management, children could learn discipline, self-control and cooperation just by doing it. Moreover, they could learn to calculate the consequences of their decisions and learn from these consequences. They also had opportunities to organise their own world according to their own vision of it but in a responsible way. The intention of Janusz Korczak was to create an educational environment where children could effectively educate themselves for citizenship and for their future.

Likewise, we think about it today. Dual understanding of the participation of children in the modern discourse can be recognised in contemporary discourse: first, participation as a goal itself, as a target to achieve; the target that is a society where children are active, full-righted and possibly widely included in various social processes and activities; entirely democratic society. On the other hand, participation



is understood as a method, a way of developing children's skills for citizenship and adulthood (Liebel, 2012). Active participation of children is seen today as the best citizenship education (Cockburn, 2013), the best way of attaining citizenship awareness and competencies for acting and the best way to get better social life in 'adult future'. Practising participation is the most effective way for children to reach the best possible citizenship of them as grown-ups (Levy, 2016).

### **A child is already a citizen**

"Children are not the people of tomorrow, but people of today". This belief led Korczak to create a picture of a child as full-righted member of a society. According to Korczak, a child has the same right to enjoy social entitlements as an adult due to his membership in a society, and is a citizen, from the early years of life. Korczak's child not only had the right to be heard, and to make decisions, but also, as a member of a society, had the right to participate in different social actions: in giving critical opinions, in sharing information and also in creating information. The small society created by Korczak in orphanages had many 'citizenship means' and institutions: the parliament, the court, the newspaper and others. Children living there used to operate with those means, and they had equal access to social citizenship goods and possibilities.

Currently, if we look at children's rights written down in articles 12–17 of the CRC, they seem to express these social activities that were offered to children by Korczak nearly a 100 years ago, like 'echoes' of that pedagogical inventions.

However, what is particularly important in this aspect is that Korczak called a child a citizen, not a citizen to be, not in the future.... but now. The most significant in this matter is the Korczak's statement: "The child – already a resident, citizen,... Not will he be, but already is". Although in fact, the terms 'citizen' and 'citizenship' were not central categories for Korczak, he is considered to be the first ever who saw a child on this social position and was determined to call a child a citizen.

Currently, in a discourse on children's participation, categories such as 'children citizenship' and 'active citizenship of children' are very popular in different scientific works (Cockburn, 2013; Lister, 2008; Milne, 2008; Ennew, 2008; Alderson 2008, Invernizzi, 2008) or political documents promoting children's and young people's participation as an active citizenship. However, on the other hand, in the social practice, there are many countries where citizenship of children is understood in a passive way – only in the meaning of their registration after birth (Lister, 2008).

### **Child and children participation: individual and collective sense**

Janusz Korczak understood the participation of children in social life in both the individual and collective sense. He used to write and think of an individual child as a citizen, as community member underlining child's right to voice, to decisions, and child's right

to be respected in the sphere of thinking, acting and creating his or her individual world. However, in addition, a lot of Korczak's comments about the adults–children relationship or about a philosophy of social life and his entire educational practice express his meaning of collective sense of children's participation. Let us return to his statement "Children account for a considerable portion of mankind, the population", which suggest his thinking of the situation of children also as a social group. In practice, he created a community of children as a group co-working with adults indeed. Those children as a group and a community were treated by Korczak as a social subject and the real partner to the community of grown-ups. Clearly, we can consider Korczak's participation of children as having individual and collective sense.

The same two dimensions of participation – individual and collective are expressed in the contemporary idea of children's citizenship (Hart, 2009; Cockburn, 2013; Lockyer, 2008; Milne, 2013; Lansdowne, 2010). Moreover, it must be noticed that the collective sense of children's participation is superior today (Liebel, 2008a, 2008b). We can find it underlined in written documents and also in the theoretical discourse. Currently, children are mainly seen as a social group who has the right to participate in social life, in social decisions and even in political decision-making processes, in the same position as others. Children as a group of a population are seen as a social group who has civil rights and rights to civil activities like other groups (CRC General Comment No. 12 (2009), European Charter... 2003; Parliamentary Assembly, 2009; (2009; Council of Europe, 2012). Due to the growing popularity of using sociopolitical theories to describe and consider children's participation, such as theories of deliberative democracy, theories of governance and theories of social change, gradually the discourse on children's participation is moving over from thinking about participation in private, individual context, although it still is practised (look for example Alderson, 2010; Butler et al., 2005; Kirby and Laws, 2010; Thomas, 2002), to its collective sense considering participation of children as participation and citizenship of a part of a society, a group of population, often with the background of the concept of discrimination of children as a group (Liebel, 2014; Thomas, 2012).

### **Children are an excluded social group**

Korczak generally saw and named the situation of children as social exclusion. It was the main thought of his critique of intergenerational relations (Liebel, 2017). The most significant in this context is Korczak's words: "being centred on our own struggles, own troubles, we fail to see the child, just as at one time we were unable to see the woman, the peasant, the oppressed strata and oppressed peoples". Therefore, he compared the social situation of children to other socially discriminated groups at that time. Social inclusion of children was in Korczak's thinking very important. That is why children in his orphanages not only had abilities to voice and to make responsible decisions but

also the right to participate in different social actions; decision-making, giving opinions, but also being informed and creating information. They were included in social, citizenship life of the institution by access to social goods and possibilities.

Currently, as an effect of years of development of the idea of children's participation, the context of seeing children as the excluded group becomes one of the main theoretical and political backgrounds in the modern discourse. Moreover, it has visibly detruded the former theoretical context that spoke mainly about child's abilities to social participation and to be a social actor (Thomas, 2012). We can observe a growing number of positions that accent the need to see children in a social context as an excluded group and to consider children's situation in the light of social inequalities, exclusion and discrimination. Gradually, this approach becomes a new theoretical (but also political) paradigm in considering children's participation. The spectacular manifestation of this tendency is more and more popular today as a term 'adultism', as expressing this point of view (Liebel, 2014). This paradigm is visibly detruding the former basic conception in studies concerning children which was based mainly on the concept of child's abilities and competencies to social participation, to make decisions and to be able to participate in social activities. The new paradigm has the background in the ideology of democracy, whereas the previous one is rooted in the new sociology of a child, and also somehow in the developmental psychology, in the meaning of polemics concerning child's abilities to different activities.

### **Equality, partnership and cooperation between children and adults**

The idea of the relationship between a child and an adult based on mutual respect and equality was strongly promoted by Korczak: "Unintelligently we divide years into less or more mature ones. There is no such thing as present immaturity, no hierarchy of age". Korczak clearly located a child on a position to be an equal partner to an adult. "They are entitled to be taken seriously. They have a right to be treated by adults with tenderness and respect, as equals". Children are not "less wise but have less experience..." as he pointed out. In another of his works, he talked about the lives of adults and children as 'an equivalent text'. Equality of children and adults as an idea and a demand sounded in many Korczak's works. As a consequence, he was deeply convinced about the possibility and the need for collaboration between children and adults. He admitted, as he discovered himself, how much an adult can learn from a dialogue with a child, so he recommended to speak "not to the children but with the children..." Korczak believed in educational and social success arising from adult-children collaboration, like in the well-known sentence "Not a despotic order, stern discipline and distrustful control, but tactful understanding, faith in experience, collaboration and coexistence". The relationship between a child and an adult, and also children and adults (as groups), was seen by Korczak as an exchange between

partners; an exchange between sides where authority is not assigned to any of them in clear-cut manner (Szczepka-Pustkowska, 2012). The acknowledgement of children as partners to adults led Korczak to create the social reality of his houses for orphans as places of not only the coexistence of children and adults and cooperation between them but also as a community co-managed by children and adults.

Equality, collaboration and partnership are the core assumptions of children's participation idea today – indeed they are its pillars. We can find them as the core meanings in many works of different authors (for example, Hart, 1992; Percy Smith and Thomas, 2010) and in a political narration of documents that explain and recommend implementation of children's participation on all social levels (for example, Parliamentary Assembly, 2009). Currently, we are fully convinced that children's participation is not only about children's voices in governance but also about, as Hart (2009) said, "all those instances where children collaborate with other children or with adults, to make decisions or plan activities together". Currently, we think, as experts called it, about developing children's participation as a "dialogue and social learning between groups..." and "...encouraging intergenerational projects which engage children and adults..." (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010).

### **Children can retrieve society**

Janusz Korczak was, as many others contemporary to him, engaged in the positivist idea to renew the society. In his concept, it can be done through children. He hoped that the world might be better if children were respected and well treated; they would take the wheel "...future landholders of the world", he wrote. He believed that children may create a better world "...the unknown person inside each of them is the hope for the future...". On the one hand, Korczak was convinced that by treating children with respect and preparing children to live in a responsible way, by teaching them how to be citizens and social creators, how to organise a society, etc., they can build a better social world, as they grow up and 'take the wheel'. "The child is the tomorrow.... [but] He will be a worker, a citizen, an employer. However, we have to wait..." said by Korczak. However, on the other hand, Korczak saw children as the better part of a society as those having a natural sense of democracy and justice and those being genuine, full of energy and creative. In this sense, the renovation of the society could become by children's virtues and possible to get through children's participation. He viewed children's input into the social life as a positive boost (Liebel, 2013), some kind of social transfusion, a positive social outcome of children's energy, creativity, honesty, justice, etc. This Korczak's belief was not romantic, what Liebel (2013) accented, but was the result of observations of children's world and feelings.

We have the same faith today. We are convinced that children's participation can bring new values to the social life and children participating in it can be excellent

resources of energy, creativity and ingenuity. Moreover, we have a lot of examples of children who changed local environments, became leaders and educators in the community and finally transformed the entire community. There are a lot of descriptions of the role of children in changes in local environments, where young people became leaders and educators of the entire local community and helped to transform the community into more active and change the conditions of living for all (Hart, 1992; Shier, 2010). However, in addition, like Korczak, we hope that by practising participation children will be able to build a better society, civil society, society of equality, solidarity, etc. as they take over the wheel. We believe that the quality of social life can be improved by implementing the rights of participation in everyday life of children all over the world (Milne, 2013). It is also believed that children's rights fully implemented will bring more justice world, where human rights are commonly respected, like Santos Pais (2016) once expressed it "if children are full holders of the right today they will be the guardians of human rights tomorrow".

### **Public and political participation of children**

Some authors claimed that Korczak did not consider the participation of children in a broader social context, i.e. in a local community or the state level, as we understood it today, and that he did not promote children's participation in a public sense. For example, Krappmann (2012) stated that Korczak limited his idea of children's activity to the institution as he wanted to save children from the negative influence of the general society (of that time) and in a closed environment tried to educate children as renovators of the society. But Krappmann (2012) also noticed that Korczak presumably would not have objected the public meaning of children's participation at all.

Studying some of later Korczak's works, some of his thoughts indicate that he probably thought that political engagement of children can be found. It can be seen in his utterance in 'how to love a child?': "from children's self-government to parliaments of the world" or in his 'child right to respect': "Politicians and lawgivers make tentative efforts, and time and again they blunder. They deliberate and decide on a child, too. But who asks the child for his opinion and consent? What can a child possibly have to say?"

Currently, the participation of children is promoted on different social levels (Lansdowne, 2011), which is seen as different processes of everyday collaboration between children and adults in the space of local communities, of the states and even more on the regional and global levels. Different forms of public participation of children are promoted and can be met in the social practice: councils of youth, children parliaments, youth conferences, youth commissions and other forms. Many authors stressed that today special accent should be put on developing participation of children on a public level (for example, Thomas, 2009) by different forms of representativeness. These bodies should be established as coexisting and cooperating with adult

ones in decision-making processes and as co-managing the reality. These bodies are considered as necessary in a society, as civil bodies that should exist in the organisational space of a society and also on the international level as the embodiment of the idea of social inclusion of children and the final acknowledgement of them as social subjects, social actors and civil rights holders.

In fact, the discourse on the political participation of children is dynamically developing the last years. The position that political participation is not fully and well expressed by article 12 of the Convention is also rising. Authors explain it that this article of CRC does not give the perspective of the wide political participation which is indeed and can be observed in real life of children all over the world (Wyness et al., 2004). There are different phenomena considered as political participation, not only the existence and activity of representative bodies of young people (councils, parliaments, commissions, etc.) at different social levels. Authors indicate also on children's activity in protests and strikes as the area of political participation of children (Liebel, 2012; Hart, 1992; Thomas, 2010b) and also tell about youth subcultures as political power and youth activity on the Internet and about other forms of political activity of youth. It is stressed that today social structures and democratic societies offer a wide range of possibilities for young people to be engaged in politics as autonomous actors, such as voting, volunteering in civic organisations and policy-making agendas, and also political protests and graffiti (Toots et al., 2014). There are a lot of activities in which children express their political aspirations and views, although sometimes they are not positively assessed by adults or/are invisible for them, because political activity of children is mainly accepted only if it is realised on adult's conditions and by organisations or representative bodies (Liebel, 2012; Wyness et al., 2004). Brian Milne thought that any children's activity who expresses their political views should be seen as political participation, no matter whether this activity is consistent with adult's rules or not and without considering its real impact on the society (Milne, 2013). The area of contemporary political participation of young people is indeed widespread and diversified and vividly discussed in modern discourse.

### **No epilogue, but steps further**

As we consider the contemporary idea of children's participation, it has indeed grown up from many Janusz Korczak's views on a child, child's social position and child's skills to different activities. His philosophy of a child and relationships between children and adults has permeated the participatory rights in the Convention. For a 100 years, they are vivid today.

However, the changes in the modern world, globalisation and diversity cannot be ignored. It challenges us with a reconceptualisation of the idea expressed in the Convention. “It is the time to look beyond Article 12... and even go beyond the CRC itself” – called Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010). They thought the steps forward should be done ‘in two directions’. One involves claiming rights for children to play a much fuller part in democratic decision-making at all levels and in all areas, rather than merely expressing views in ‘matters affecting the child’. The other involves looking much more closely at how rights, equality and justice for children and young people can be met through their active participation in the everyday life of their communities. Other authors ask whether the participatory rights written in the Convention are not too limited for the diversity of the worldwide situations of children’s participation in various cultures, societies and communities. It is too narrow conceptual framework, as they claim, because it ignores a lot of realities of participation of children in an economic and political area (Liebel, 2012; Milne, 2013). They agitate for creating such a concept of participation which is sensitive to different forms of it possible in different cultural contexts. There are also many other reasons for the limitation of the Convention concept of children’s participation that are taken up and why it is stressed that the Convention should not be seen as the end of the discussion on the idea, but rather as the opening this ‘gate’.

## References

- Alderson, P. (2010). Younger children’s individual participation in matters affecting them. In: B. Percy-Smith, & N. Thomas (Eds.), *Handbook of Children and Young People’s Participation. Perspectives from Theory and Practice* (pp. 88–96). London, New York: Routledge.
- Beck, U. (1997). Democratization of the Family. *Childhood*, 4(2), 151–168.
- Berman, G., Hart, J., O’Mathuna, D., Mattellone, E., Potts, A., O’Kane, C., Shusterman, J., & Tanner, T. (2013). *What we know about ethical research involving children in humanitarian settings. An overview of principles, the literature and case studies*. Office of Research – Innocenti Working Papers, Florence 2016.
- Butler, I., Robinson, M., & Scanlan, L. (2005). *Children and Decision Making*. London: National Children’s Bureau for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Canosa A., Graham, A., & Wilson, E. (2018). Reflexivity and ethical mindfulness in participatory research with children: What does it really look like? *Childhood*, 25(3), 400–415.
- Cockburn, T. (2013). *Rethinking Children’s Citizenship*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan
- Coleman, J. (2010). *The Nature of Adolescent*. London: Routledge.
- Council of Europe. (2006). Recommendation Rec(2006)14 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on citizenship and participation of young people in public life. Retrieved from: [https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3084919/CoE\\_Rec2006\\_14.pdf/620ff7af-2fc2-45f2-a7a6-b2dcd69f435d](https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/1017981/3084919/CoE_Rec2006_14.pdf/620ff7af-2fc2-45f2-a7a6-b2dcd69f435d) (accessed: January 5, 2019).
- Council of Europe. (2012). Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the participation of children and young people under the age of



18. Retrieved from: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/506981802.pdf> (accessed: January 5, 2019).
- CRC General Comment No. 12. (2009). *The right of the child to be heard*. Retrieved from: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/5040/pdf/5040.pdf> (accessed: January 2, 2019).
- Dahl, T. (2014). Children as researchers: We have a lot to learn. In: G. Melton, A. Ben-Arieh, J. Cashmore, G.S. Goodman, & N. Worley, (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Child Research* (pp. 593–618). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Damaj, M., Henderson, R. (2010). On strategies and practices. In: B. Percy-Smith, & N. Thomas (Eds.), *Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation. Perspectives from Theory and Practice* (pp. 240–244). London, New York: Routledge.
- Davis, T. (2009). *Can social networks bridge the participation gap?* Retrieved from: <http://www.timdavies.org.uk/2009/05/18/can-social-networks-bridge-the-participation-gap/> (accessed: December 7, 2018).
- Driskell, D. (2002). *Creating Better Cities with Children and Youth – a Manual for Participation*. UNESCO.
- Ennew J. (2008). Children as „citizens“ of the United Nations (UN). In: A. Invernizzi, & J. Williams (Eds.), *Children and citizenship* (pp. 66–78). Los Angeles: Sage.
- European Charter on the participation of young people in local and regional life (2003). Retrieved from: <https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-1510/Revised%20European%20Charter%20on%20the%20Participation%20of%20YP.pdf> (accessed: December 5, 2018).
- Fitzgerald, R., Graham, A., Smith, A., & Taylor, N. (2010). Children's participation as a struggle over recognition: Exploring the promise of dialogue. In: B. Percy-Smith, & N. Thomas (Eds.), *A Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspective from Theory and Practice* (pp. 293–305). London, New York: Routledge.
- Hart, R. (1992). *Children Participation. From tokenism to citizenship*. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research.
- Hart, R. (1997), *Children's Participation: The Theory and Practice of Involving Young Citizens in Community Development and Environmental Care*. London: Earthscan.
- Hart, R. (2009). Charting change in the participatory settings of childhood. In: N. Thomas (Ed.), *Children, Politics and Communication. Participation at the Margins* (pp. 7–30). Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Invernizzi, A., & Williams, J. (2008). Introduction. In: A. Invernizzi & J. Williams (Eds.), *Children and citizenship* (pp. 1–7). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Jenks, C. (1996). *Childhood*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Johnson, V. (2009). Children's autonomous organisations: reflections from the ground. In: N. Thomas (Ed.), *Children, Politics and Communication. Participation at the Margins*. Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Kirby, P., & Laws, S. (2010). Advocacy for children in family group conferences: Reflections on personal and public decision-making. In: B. Percy-Smith, & N. Thomas (Eds.), *Hand-*

- book of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice* (pp. 113–120). London, New York: Routledge.
- Korczak, J. (1928). Wstęp [Introduction]. In: M. Rogowska-Falska, *Zakład Wychowawczy „Nasz Dom”. Szkic informacyjny, 1928*.
- Korczak, J. (1984). *Pisma wybrane*, ed. by A. Lewin. Vol. 1–2. Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia.
- Krappmann, L. (2012). The child as a citizen. In: B. Smolińska-Theiss (Ed.), *The Year of Janusz Korczak 2012. There are No Children, There are People* (pp. 332–353). Warsaw: Office of the Ombudsman on Children Rights.
- Lansdowne, G. (2011). *Every Child's Right to be Heard. A Resource Guide on the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment no 12*. UK, London: Save the Children.
- Lansdowne, G. (2010). *Addressing the balance of power*. In: M. Shuurman (Ed.), *Valuing Children's Potentials* (pp. 43–44). Brussels. Retrieved from: <http://nmd.bg/en/valuing-childrens-potential/> (accessed: January 2, 2019).
- Levy, J. (2016). Democracy begins with children rights. *Pedagogika Społeczna*, 2, 61–66.
- Liebel, M. (2008). Children researching. In: D. Baladur, & B. Qvarsell (Eds.), *Children's Rights to Education and Information in a Global World*. Iasi: Editura Universitati.
- Liebel, M. (2008). Citizenship from below: Children's rights and social movements. In: A. Invernizzi, & J. Williams, (Eds.), *Children and Citizenship* (pp. 32–43). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Liebel, M. (2012). *Children's Rights from Below*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Liebel, M. (2013). Janusz Korczaks Verstandnis der Kinderrechte als Handlungsrechte, In: M. Liebel (Ed.), *Janusz Korczak – Pionier der Kinderrechte. Ein internationales Symposium* (pp. 63–82), Berlin – Munster, 2013
- Liebel, M. (2014). Adultism and Age-based Discrimination against Children. In: D. Kutsar, & H. Warming (Eds.), *Children and Non-discrimination: Interdisciplinary Textbook* (pp. 119–143). CREAN, University Press of Estonia.
- Liebel, M. (Ed.) (2012). *Children's Rights from Below: Cross Cultural Perspectives*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lister, R. (2008). Unpacking children's citizenship. In: A. Invernizzi, & J. Williams, (Eds.), *Children and Citizenship* (pp. 9–19). London: Sage.
- Lockyer, A. (2008). Education for citizenship: children as citizens and political literacy. In: A. Invernizzi, & J. Williams (Eds.), *Children and citizenship* (pp. 20–31). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Milne, B. (2008). From chattels to citizens? Eighty years of Eglantyne Jebb's Legacy to children and beyond. In: A. Invernizzi, & J. Williams (Eds.), *Children and Citizenship* (pp. 44–54). London: Sage.
- Milne, B. (2013). *The History and Theory of Children's Citizenship in Contemporary Societies*. Dordrecht, New York, London: Springer.
- Mitchell, R. (2015). Children's rights and citizenship studies: Re-theorizing child citizenship through transdisciplinarity from the local to the global. In: W. Vandenhoe, E. Desmet, D. Reynaert, & S. Lembrechts (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Children's Rights Studies* (pp. 164–182). London, New York: Routledge International.

- Parliamentary Assembly. (2009). Recommendation 1864 (2009) on promoting the participation by children in decisions affecting them. Retrieved from: <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17721&lang=en> (accessed: January 6, 2019).
- Percy-Smith, B., & Thomas, N. (2010). Emerging themes and new directions. In: B. Percy-Smith, & N. Thomas (Eds.), *Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice* (pp. 356–366). New York: Routledge
- Roche, J. (1999). Children: Rights, Participation and citizenship. *Childhood*, 6(4), 475–493.
- Roche, J. (2005). Children citizenship and human rights. In: A. Invernizzi, & J. Williams (Eds.), *Children and citizenship*. London: Sage.
- Santos Pais, M. (2016). *Special Representative of the UN Secretary General speech during the High level conference on a new European strategy on the rights of the child, Sofia 5.04.2016*. Retrieved from: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/children/sofia2016> (accessed: April 21, 2016).
- Shier, H. (2001). Pathways to participation: openings, opportunities and obligations. *Children and Society*, 15(2), 107–117.
- Shier, H. (2010). Pathways to participation revisited: Learning from Nicaragua's child coffee workers. In: B. Percy-Smith, & N. Thomas (Eds.), *Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation. Perspectives from Theory and Practice* (pp. 215–229). New York: Routledge.
- Skyrme, S.L., Woods, S. (2018). Researching disabled children and young people's views on decision-making: Working reflexively to rethink vulnerability. *Childhood*, 25(3), 355–368.
- Soffer, M., & Ben-Arieh, A. (2014). School-Aged children as source of information about their lives. In: G. Melton, A. Ben-Arieh, J. Cashmore, G.S. Goodman, & N. Worley, (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Child Research* (pp. 555–574). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Szczepka- Pustkowska M. (2012). Dziecko – obywatel czy wykluczony? *Problemy Wczesnej Edukacji*, 2(17), 8–23.
- Thomas, N. (2012). Love, rights and solidarity: Studying children's participation using Honneth's theory of recognition. *Childhood*, 19(4), 453–466.
- Thomas, N. (2002). *Children Family and the State: Decision Making and Child Participation*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- Thomas, N. (2010a). Introduction: Children, politics and communication. In: N. Thomas, (Ed.), *Children, politics and communication: Participation at the margins* (pp. 1–8). Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Thomas, N. (2010b). Conclusion: Autonomy, dialogue and recognition. In: N. Thomas (Ed.), *Children, politics and communication: Participation at the margins* (pp. 185–198). Bristol: The Policy Press.
- Thomas, N. (Ed.) (2009). *Children, politics and communication: Participation at the margins*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

- Thomas, N., & Percy-Smith, B. (Eds.) (2010). *A Handbook of children and young people's participation: Perspective from theory and practice*. London, New York: Routledge.
- Tisdall, E.K. (2015). Children and young people's participation. A critical consideration of Article12. In: W. Vandenhoe, E. Desmet, D. Reynaert, & S. Lembrechts (Eds.), *Routledge International Handbook of Children's Rights Studies* (pp. 185–200). London, New York: Routledge International.
- Toots, A., Worley, N., Skosireva, A. (2014). Children as political actors. In: G. Melton, A. Ben-Arieh, J. Cashmore, G.S. Goodman, & N. Worley (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Child Research* (pp. 54–80). Los Angeles: Sage.
- Treseder, P. (1997). Empowering Children and Young People: Promoting Involvement in Decision-Making. Children's Rights Office, Save the Children.
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. (2009). General Comment No. 12, the Right of the Child to Be Heard (CRC/C/GC/12). Geneva.
- UNICEF. (2013). Ethical Research Involving Children. Florence: UNICEF Office of Research Innocenti.
- Warming, H., Galløe, L., Haumark Carlsen, A.R., & Rasmussen, S.R. (2018). Beasts, victims or competent agents: The positioning of children in research literature on manipulation. *Childhood*, 1–15. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1177/0907568218803429> (accessed: January 2, 2019).
- Wong, N.T., Zimmerman, M. (2010). A typology of youth participation and empowerment for child and adolescent health promotion. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 46(1–2). Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-010-9330-0> (accessed: December 8, 2018).
- Wyness, M., Harrison, L., & Buchanan, I. (2004). Childhood, politics and ambiguity: towards an agenda for children's political inclusion. *Sociology*, 38(1), 81–98.
- Wyness, M. (2012). *Childhood and society*. 2nd ed. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Yamashita, H., Davies, L. (2010). Students as professionals. In: B. Percy-Smith, & N. Thomas (Eds.), *Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from Theory and Practice* (pp. 230–239). London, New York: Routledge.